

Powerful Prayer Principles

Matthew 6:9a

We are on the most important journey of the Christian life, a "journey into powerful prayer." Prayer is the most important thing we do because prayer can do anything God can do! And, what can God do? Anything! Prayer is not a meaningless, habitual task required of us. It is a time when we connect with the person and power of God.

To have a "journey into powerful prayer," Jesus gives us at least five general principles in the Lord's Prayer that apply to every prayer we pray.

1. Prayers are to be prayed not recited

To have a "journey into powerful prayer," we must not miss how Jesus introduces what we call the "Lord's Prayer." What does Jesus say just before He begins the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9a)?

Notice Jesus does not say, "Pray this prayer," or "Memorize and recite this prayer." He says, "Pray *after this manner* (emphasis mine)." We are not just to recite a prayer; we are to pray a prayer.

There are times when quoting this prayer is very appropriate, but we should not merely recite the words; we should pray from our hearts. Simply repeating a prayer is not necessarily spiritual. What does Isaiah 29:13a tell us about how the Lord does *not* want us to pray?

God wants our prayers to come from our hearts, not just our mouths. In this prayer, Jesus gives us prayer principles, some of which should be included in every prayer. However, our prayers must come from the heart and not just be repeated or recited. This is because of what truth found in the last sentence of 1 Samuel 16:7?

Prayers are to be prayed not recited because only then do we pray from the heart, and that is where God is looking.

2. God can do anything, and I can do nothing

We do not come to God offering our assistance. We come to God asking for the privilege of being a part of His plan and program. How does Jesus make this clear in the last phrase of John 15:5?

This means without Christ we *can do nothing* of spiritual or eternal significance. Yes, we can get a college degree, make tons of money, have an impressive career, or become famous, but we *can do nothing* of real, eternal significance apart from Jesus.

When God sends the angel Gabriel to inform the Virgin Mary she will give birth to Jesus, Mary asks how this can happen since she is a virgin. How does Gabriel answer in Luke 1:37?

This principle means God can accomplish whatever He wants on earth without our help. Therefore, whatever He gives us to do as His purpose or will for our lives is a privilege. It is a privilege for us because He could create someone else who could do it better.

It is my privilege to serve God as a pastor, teacher, and author. God could get a thousand people to do everything I do and do it much better. Yet, because He loves me, in spite of all my weaknesses and shortcomings, He gives me the privilege of serving Him, which brings us to the next powerful prayer principle...

3. God is God, and I am His Servant

The Lord's Prayer focuses on God at the beginning and the end to remind us of this principle. God is not an "errand boy" or "divine Santa Claus" to whom we present our wish list. Prayer is not a time to make demands of God. Prayer is a time when we, as sinful servants, speak to our Holy God. When we pray, we should remember what truth seen in Jacob's attitude when he prayed in Genesis 32:10a?

Yes, we are to call God *Father* (and we will discuss that), but we are never to forget God is a King with a kingdom, and we are on this earth to help bring His kingdom here, not to set up our own little kingdom.

In the first section of the Bible we find two men who clearly understood God is God and we are His servants. To one God gave the privilege of receiving the Ten Commandments and the plans for building the tabernacle, as well as inspiring him to write the first five books of the Bible. Then, there is the first person in the Bible to have a book named after him. Of course, I am referring to Moses and Joshua. Why was God so pleased with them? Let's see how God sums up their lives in His Holy Word. When Moses and Joshua die, what phrase does God use to describe them both? (See Deut. 34:5 & Josh. 24:29.)

Why did these two men make such a difference in the world? They were both great men of prayer and knew God is God and we are His servants. We don't pray to get God to serve us; we pray so we can better serve God.

4. Prayers should always begin and end with praise

The Lord's Prayer has six petitions or requests. The first three refer to God's *name*, *kingdom*, and *will* (Matt. 6:9-10). This means powerful prayers begin by focusing on God. The second three requests are for *daily bread* (daily provisions), forgiveness, and protection (6:11-13a). Then, the prayer ends by focusing on God's *kingdom*, *power*, and *glory* (6:13b).

The first request in the Model Prayer is *Hallowed be thy name* (6:9c). The prayer ends, *For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever* (6:13b). Praise reminds us of who God is and changes the focus from what we need or want to what God's will is. Prayer is a time when God wants us to develop what attitude found in David's prayer in Psalms 86:12?

Beginning and ending with praise makes our prayer time an exhilarating experience. Praise takes the burdens and worries from life and adds tremendous power to our prayers.

5. Don't worry about length

The Lord's Prayer is a part of the Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus gives some introductory principles to follow in all our prayers. He begins by warning against praying like the hypocrites, who love to pray just to *be seen of men* (Matt. 6:5). Then, He warns about repetitious prayers, or babbling on and on, thinking we will be heard for our *much speaking* (Matt. 6:7). The length of our prayers does not make them more powerful.

How many words are in the Lord's Prayer? 66. How long does it take to pray the Lord's Prayer? About 20 seconds! Therefore, we see that our requests should be specific and to the point. God is not interested in a lot of "fluffy" Christian jargon. It is so liberating to realize God accepts short prayers as well as long ones, and both are scriptural.

The shortest prayer in the Bible is just three words. When Peter tries to walk on the water to Christ and begins to sink, what does he pray? (See Matthew 14:30.)

We can see all five **powerful prayer principles** in this short prayer. First, it is a prayer from the heart, not just recited words. Also, this short prayer reveals Peter believes the Lord can do anything. It is obvious Peter recognizes God is God and he is the servant because he calls Him *Lord*. Is there any praise in this prayer? Yes! Simply trusting in God's power to save him is praise. Therefore, prayers do not have to be long to contain the principles Jesus taught in the Lord's Prayer.

Our prayers can also be long, like Solomon's prayer to dedicate the temple, which is a very long 28 verses (2 Chron. 6:14-42). The length of our prayers is not important, but using the principles Jesus gives us in the Lord's Prayer is. We can experience a powerful prayer life and have tremendous confidence in approaching God in prayer if we remember one fundamental thing about prayer: *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he hears us* (1 John 5:14). Moreover, if we know He hears us, of what does 1 John 5:15 assure us?

How do we know if we are praying according to His will? By following the principles Jesus gives us in the Lord's Prayer. To have a "journey into powerful prayer," we must remember these powerful prayer principles: **prayers are to be prayed not recited, God can do anything and I can do nothing, God is God and I am His servant, prayers should always begin and end with praise, and don't worry about length.** Which of these principles do you need to work on most in your prayer life, beginning today?